GRUBER
FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"WOMEN TAKING THE LEAD IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES"

2007 Gruber Women's Rights Symposium Features Top International Women Activists

Pinar Ilkkaracan of Turkey to Receive Prestigious Gruber Prize and its $500,000 Award at New York University Law School on October 16, 2007

October 5, 2007, New York, NY – Emmy-award winning filmmaker **Anisa Mehdi** will lead an exciting panel discussion about how women are breaking new ground in advancing their rights and roles in Muslim societies. Panelists include 2007 Gruber Women's Rights Prize recipient **Pinar Ilkkaracan** of Turkey; **Daisy Khan**, Executive Director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement; **Zainab Salbi**, founder of Women for Women International; and **Sakena Yacoobi**, founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning and 2004 Gruber Women's Rights Prize Laureate.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation will present its 2007 Women's Right Prize to Pinar Ilkkaracan of Istanbul, Turkey, and two organizations she helped establish. Ms. Ilkkaracan, Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways (WWHR) and the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) will share the unrestricted $500,000 (US) award. The symposium will immediately follow the Prize ceremony on October 16, 2007, at New York University School of Law.

Video of the symposium will be available worldwide beginning Thursday, October 18, 2007 on the Gruber website
http://gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/WomensRights_LaureateOverview.php?awardid=33

Symposium Participants:

Pinar Ilkkaracan – 2007 Gruber Women's Rights Prize Recipient. Within a political environment not normally cited for advances in the status of women and their equal protection under law, Ms. Ilkkaracan has broken new ground in helping to effect radical and extensive reforms of Turkish law to bring equality to women in many areas. Through WWHR and CSBR – organizations she helped found – Ms. Ilkkaracan has played an important role in training Turkish women in legal literacy and helping to reform civil and penal codes to advance women's rights in Turkey and internationally. The work of Ilkkaracan and the two organizations, with which she shares the Gruber Women's Rights Prize, has brought about significant, tangible improvement in the day-to-day treatment of women under Turkish law.

Daisy Khan – Executive Director of the ASMA Society (American Society for Muslim Advancement), a non-profit organization dedicated to developing an American Muslim identity and to building bridges between the Muslim community and the general public through dialogues in faith, identity, culture, and arts. Ms. Khan mentors young Muslims on questions of assimilation, tradition and modernity, and intergenerational challenges. In the aftermath of 9/11, she focused on creating interfaith programs aimed at seeking commonalities among the Abrahamic faith traditions. Last year, Ms. Khan launched two cutting-edge intrafaith programs: MLT (Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow) and WISE (Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity).

Zainab Salbi – Founder and CEO of Women for Women International. Ms. Salbi has initiated a quiet but strong movement to help women survivors of wars and civil strife to rebuild their lives. Ms. Salbi has dedicated her life to the belief that stronger women build stronger nations. She is the author (with Laurie Bucklend) of Between Two Worlds: Escape from Tyranny: Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam, a memoir that documents her life growing up in Iraq. She is also the author of The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope where she chronicles the stories of women who overcome the horrors of war and rebuilt their families and countries. In addition to her numerous personal honors, Women to Women International was recently awarded the Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize. Ms. Salbi serves on the Gruber Women's Rights Advisory Board which selected Ms. Ilkkaracan, WWHR and CSBR for this year's award.

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Sakena Yacoobi – Founder of AIL (Afghan Institute of Learning) and 2004 Gruber Women's Rights Prize Laureate. After receiving a Master's Degree in Public Health in the U.S., Professor Yacoobi returned to her native Afghanistan, where she began working with Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. She established a grassroots program within the International Rescue Committee and within a year had quadrupled the number of Afghan girls enrolled in school. Prof. Yacoobi and her staff managed five women's programs serving 17,000 refugees. In 1995 Prof. Yacoobi founded the Afghan Institute of Learning; under her leadership, AIL quickly grew to be one of the largest women-led, non-governmental organizations in the country.

Anisa Mehdi, Moderator –An Emmy Award-winning journalist specializing in religion, the arts, and people. For over 20 years Ms. Mehdi has reported, written, directed and produced television news and documentary programs for major American media outlets, including National Geographic, PBS, ABC News, and CBS. Her commentaries have been heard on NPR's "All Things Considered." She has written perspective pieces for newspapers, magazines and Internet sites. Ms. Mehdi is founder and president of Whetstone Productions, a New Jersey-based production and consulting company. She is adjunct Professor of Communications at Seton Hall University.

Additional Information

The **Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize** is presented to an individual or group that has made significant contributions, often at great personal or professional risk, to furthering the rights of women and girls in any area and to advancing public awareness of the need for gender equality to achieve a just world.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about the Foundation and its priorities, please go to: www.gruberprizes.org.

NOTE TO MEDIA: PRIZE RECIPIENT AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

To schedule a one-on-one interview with Ms. Ilkkaracan or to attend and cover the symposium, contact Alyson O'Mahoney at (914) 241-0086, ext 13, or email aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com.

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